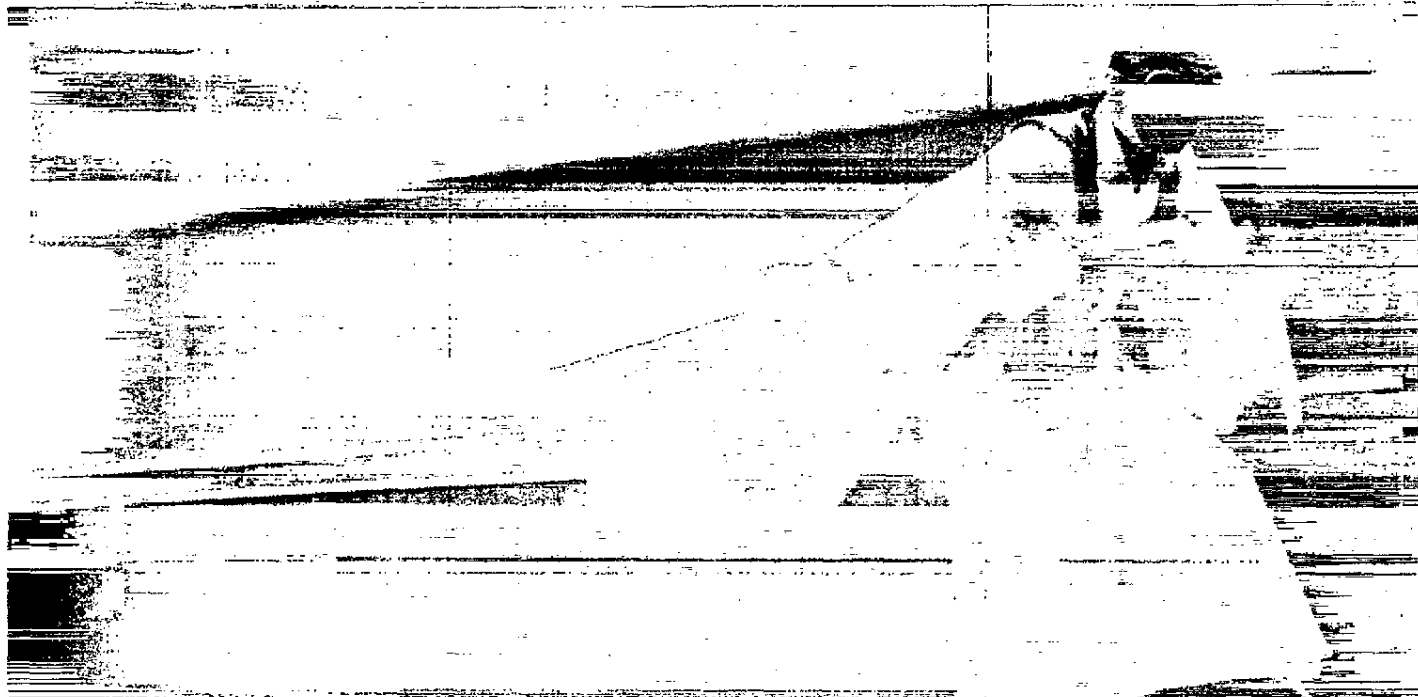


HEY, BOYS, WATCH ME DO THIS.  
WERE THE LAST WORDS HE SPOKE.  
SMOKED KAMELS.



EST.

1913

BACK FOR NO GOOD REASON

EXCEPT THEY TASTE GOOD

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigarette  
Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.

RED  
LIGHTS

RED  
KAMEL  
ORIGINALS  
GENUINE TASTE  
ORIGINALS

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RED KAMEL ORIGINALS: 17 mg. "tar", 1.3 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method.  
RED KAMEL LIGHTS: 10 mg. "tar", 0.9 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method.

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# Battery Row

BY AMI CHEN MILLS

As domestic violence hits epidemic levels, treatment of offenders has taken a radical feminist turn that some say favors ideology over results

JUST A FEW ROWS from where she sat in a diner in Shreveport, Louisiana, Janet Lynd could see the state troopers. Two of them were drinking coffee, attempting to escape a muggy Shreveport summer day. Lynd wondered if she should make a break and try to get to the car, throw herself on their starched blue mercy. Mike was out in the car, furious, glaring at her through the window. Would they be able to force him to leave? And what would happen when she got home to California? The possibilities weighed heavily, and she let her head drop. She'd been living in terror ever since she and Mike embarked on this road trip. Driving in silence for hours, him in a dismal funk, then angry and screaming, swinging things at her, then not wanting to talk to anyone—she had had to deal with rangers and hotel clerks who sat brooding in the car.

She thought twice about the police. Three weeks later, as Lynd tells it, on July 2, 1996, back in Campbell home she owns and shared with him, James Michael Nichter, a Silicon Valley accountant, slugged her so much force she crumbled to the floor in a heap. "He picked me up and threw me into the sunken living room. On the floor, with my eyes shut, I felt Nichter yelling into my face. She said two words or assaultant, "Oh, Mike."

It was a sigh, a resignation. He then, according to her statements to police, crawled down the stairs to the master bedroom, locking the door behind her. There she treated the alleged blow to her face, hoping Nichter would go away. A couple hours later, there were three taps on her door. Mike wanted to talk; he was now. Lynd told him to wait downstairs, and she folded a few minutes later, holding a towel to her face. He promptly started screaming, calling her a cunt, a bitch and more. "It was pure fury," Lynd says. She reached for the phone to call 911. Nichter grabbed the phone and hung it up, still screaming.

A phone rang. When Nichter answered, his demeanor shifted abruptly. He was charming, gentle Mike Nichter, the man Lynd had fallen in love with a year ago.

Terrified, Lynd yelled, "He's attacked me. Call the police!" "When he got off the phone, he had this predatory look," Lynd says. "His face turned gray, and I knew he was coming for me and I just started to run."

According to Lynd, Nichter heaved a lamp after her. The lamp shattered on the floor as Lynd ran out the front door and sought shelter among oleander bushes edging a vacant building nearby. When police arrived 15 minutes later, Mike had cleaned up the breakage and tidied the house. Once again, he was welcoming, gracious, almost jovial.

Campbell police shone a flashlight on Lynd, trembling in the dark. "Doesn't look like any damage," one officer said. They took Nichter, who denied any wrongdoing, to a local hotel.

**W**HAT IF HE WERE caught drunk driving? He would have gone to jail. Instead, he got escorted to a hotel and told he could come back to my house!" Lynd tells this story in the sunlit employee cafeteria at Santa Clara County Social Services almost a year later. She hasn't eaten or slept much. Her attacker is still on the loose, and Lynd says he has violated an emergency protective order eight times.

Lynd found out about the existence of Emergency Protective Orders not from police but from Next Door, a domestic violence agency in San Jose she contacted on her own. For two days before the EPO was served, Nichter still had keys to Lynd's house and car. The next morning, Nichter entered the house and posted "keep out" notes on his stuff. That afternoon, Nichter came in with a friend, she says, and chanted, "Kill, kill, kill," outside her locked bedroom door.

Lynd's case was dropped by the DA's office on July 11 before photos of her bruises and wounds were even developed. The police department, she says, destroyed the roll of film. She claims her dealings with Campbell police and the county judicial system have been "bewildering, insensitive and in some cases blatantly hostile."

According to Lynd, Nichter—who owns a house on the same block—has since surprised her, screaming obscenities when she stepped outside to empty her garbage. Lynd sleeps in her bedroom with the door locked.

Charges were finally filed, and a warrant for Nichter's arrest was issued Dec. 17, half a year after the incident. The warrant was lost, she says, in the municipal court and was not signed by a judge until the end of January. Despite Nichter's threatening behavior, a requested bail of \$25,000 was lowered to \$5,000—and Nichter is back on the street.

"Are you starting to get the picture?" she says, sipping coffee, too nervous to eat even a piece of fruit. Lynd's delicate blonde hair has been falling out. She bears the countenance of a woman hounded. She has already changed her telephone number and now she thinks she might have to move. "He's right where I live, and it's been one thing after another," she says. "But why should I have to move? I didn't do anything wrong."

**T**HESSE DAYS, LYND spends much of her time with Pam Butler, Santa Clara County's recently hired Victim Advocate. Like Lynd, Butler was the victim of an abusive relationship, which lasted 18 months. With the help of a persistent DA, Butler was able to get her ex-husband indicted on 12 felony charges and one misdemeanor. Michael Braga is now serving almost seven years in prison, but he'll be free in a year, and, Butler says, "I know this guy. He's hell-bent on revenge. The guards are telling me to be scared. When he gets out, I'll be looking over my shoulder until one of us is dead."

In the meantime, Butler, an energetic straight-talker with an upbeat, gallows humor, spends nearly 14 hours a day attempting to help women like Janet Lynd navigate a system she claims is often indifferent to the plight of battered women.

According to Butler, Lynd is the victim "that doesn't exist" because Lynd was battered only once. Butler—who has become a victims' advocate of national stature—tells stories of women who live in terror every day, unsure of what to do or say to their batterers, unable to do anything "right."

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